

Sixth Day.
25 April 1907.

EMIGRATION.
(Mr. Deakin.)

with rations, or an alternative for contract cutting by mutual agreement. Of course the prices earned by contract cutting must not be measured by the price for day labour. They are the earnings of exceptionally skilled and capable men, just as some of our shearers always earn twice or thrice as much as the ordinary shearers because they have a special aptitude. The reply of the Committee was even more direct and unqualified than their published circular, because in answer, Mr. Henry Lambert, signing as Chairman, on the 15th March last says: "My Committee do not consider that "emigrants from this country are at all suited for work on sugar plantations"—the whole sugar industry is swept out—"and they would certainly "feel it their duty to warn them against undertaking such work in the "tropics." I think explicitness is a great virtue; it is one of the greatest official virtues, and there is no doubt about the perfect explicitness of that statement. The Emigration Office feel it their duty, owing to their own want of knowledge, actually to warn British emigrants against undertaking the work which is now being undertaken successfully by several thousand white men this season. The industry is very prosperous; the contract rates I referred to are exceptionally high. If the whole industry were conducted on that basis, Dr. Jameson's criticism would be quite justified. The average man is on daily wages. I mentioned those high rates because they tend to withdraw men from the daily wage system to the contract system, in which, as a rule, they get better results than on the daily system. Otherwise they would not undertake it. Only exceptionally qualified men get the wonderful results mentioned, which are of great value, although they are rare, because they operate as a stimulus to attract men to the industry, and as a stimulus to the men employed in the industry to put forth their best efforts. When others see a man able to make 1*l.* a day for weeks in succession, and return home with the results, that helps to draw people in Australia to this industry. Undoubtedly in every part of it this work will be accomplished by white labour only. We have enough direct experience now to be quite satisfied that it can be done. There is no doubt about that. Those exceptional terms attract people to it. The average men do not earn so much, but the work is being done efficiently by white labour to-day—more than half of it. If my memory serves me, I think nearly three parts of the work will be done by white labour this season. Under these circumstances, for a Government Agency to absolutely warn men against undertaking work which men are already doing, and doing most profitably, certainly points to a very strange condition of affairs.

Mr. BURNS: Lord Elgin and gentlemen, the Conference has decided unanimously to adopt the first paragraph, that "it is desirable to encourage "British emigrants to proceed to British Colonies rather than to foreign "countries." Against that first paragraph the Government have no objection to make, because it practically connotes a line of action that has been taken not only by the Government but by all the subordinate authorities throughout the United Kingdom during the last 15 or 20 years with regard to the direction of, advice to, and guidance of intending settlers in new countries from the Mother Country.

We are discussing the second paragraph now, which says: "That the "Imperial Government be requested to co-operate with any Colonies desiring "immigrants in assisting suitable persons to emigrate." That, of course, brings us face to face with practical methods and probable financial schemes, and on that it is advisable that the view of the Government should be in the main expressed. Before it is expressed it is advisable that the point raised by Mr. Deakin should be met, and I trust mutually satisfactorily cleared away. The Government think that as so many Colonies are all competing for emigrants from the same source it is very difficult to give